

MASI Lugano

Museo d'arte
della Svizzera italiana,
Lugano

Via Canova 10
CH – 6901 Lugano

comunicazione@masilugano.ch
+41 (0)91 815 7996
www.masilugano.ch

Albert Oehlen **“big paintings by me with small paintings by others”**

05 September 2021 – 20 February 2022
Museo d'arte della Svizzera italiana, Lugano
MASI | LAC

PRESS RELEASE

Lugano, 16 July 2021

From 5 September 2021 to 20 February 2022, MASI presents the exhibition titled *Albert Oehlen – “big paintings by me with small paintings by others”*. For this project Albert Oehlen is at the same time an artist, a curator and a collector. Iconic works embodying different phases of his painting career will be displayed alongside a selection of more than thirty international artists belonging to his private collection.

It is always very interesting when artists collect art, and this is particularly true in the case of a reserved, elusive and sometimes even cryptic artist like Albert Oehlen. This is the first time that masterpieces by Oehlen are exhibited alongside works from his private art collection in such an extensive form and in a display conceived by the artist himself in partnership with MASI. This project not only offers surprising insights into his work, but also allows visitors to discover, or rediscover, a series of exceptional artists. The core group of works, representing the essence of Oehlen's art, and the extraordinary chance to admire a part of his private collection in a museum, will enable visitors to engage with the depth and breadth of his pictorial exploration. For many years Oehlen has been expanding his collection with works by artists with whom he feels a connection, not in terms of likeness, but because they address ideas – often associated with the concept of painting – that are very relevant to him too. However, while all the works featured in the exhibition reveal inspiration and similarities (in some cases very evidently), we must not forget that the artist rejects all kinds of classification and rational analysis of his oeuvre. Indeed, Oehlen has always actively shunned interpretative methods that seek to define the meaning of form and content, or, more simply, rejects an approach focusing on the wish to understand art in general. Consequently, the exhibition does not aim

to suggest comparisons between Oehlen's work and that of other artists or to insert his work in a "genealogy", but rather to give visitors an exceptional glimpse into his private collection and allow them to engage – perhaps for the first time – with the work of important international artists in an original and exciting narrative that recounts the history of the art of recent decades from Oehlen's personal perspective.

The exhibition project designed by Oehlen presents both works by famous artists, including Willem de Kooning, Mike Kelley, Paul McCarthy, Duane Hanson, Franz West, Julian Schnabel, Konrad Klapheck, Richard Lindner, Richard Artschwager, Daniel Richter and Malcolm Morley, and works by equally stimulating but lesser-known artists such as Peter Brüning, Martha Jungwirth, Michaela Eichwald, John Graham, Eugène Leroy, Joyce Pensato, Christina Ramberg, Karl Wirsum, Ed Paschke, Gernot Bubenik and Gino De Dominicis. The intentionally provocative title of the exhibition immediately reveals Oehlen's irreverent attitude and the sense of humour of someone who takes his profession seriously, but plays with the art system, making fun of the conditions that it often entails.

The artist

Albert Oehlen (b. 1954) is one of the most influential contemporary painters of the international art scene. Since the 1980s he has been exploring the potential and limits of painting, constantly questioning its subjects and the methods and media that it employs, through his continuously evolving style and technique.

Born in Krefeld, Germany, Oehlen studied at the Hochschule für bildende Künste in Hamburg from 1978 to 1981, and soon became a prominent figure of the Berlin and Cologne art scenes. During that time, he was considered an artist of the *Junge Wilde* (Young Wilds) movement, along with Martin Kippenberger and Werner Büttner, producing works that challenged the categorisation of art and rejected the art system itself. Oehlen deconstructed painting, stripping it down to its constituent parts – colour, gesture, movement and time – and advancing his artistic quest with rules and restrictions that he imposed upon his own artistic process, which offered him new starting points to continue redefining the understanding of painting.

Over the years, this way of working, which Oehlen continues to use today, has led to surprising series of works that combine abstract and figurative art and different styles and techniques. Since the time of his *Bad Paintings*, Oehlen also features clumsiness and ugliness in his work – disturbing gestures, roughly depicted figures, artificial smudges of paint, daring and jarring colours – constantly applying pressure to the painting system and displaying infinite combinations and manipulations with which he creates new perceptive challenges for the public too.

The Catalogue

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue published by Mousse Publishing with an introduction by MASI's Director Tobia Bezzola and scientific contributions by Francesca Benini and Christian Dominguez. All the works in the exhibition are reproduced in the catalogue. Bilingual edition (English and Italian).

Artists

Richard Artschwager / Hans Bellmer / Peter Brüning / Gernot Bubenik / Gino de Dominicis / Willem de Kooning / Michaela Eichwald / Bruno Goller / John Graham / Duane Hanson / Jever / Hans Josephsohn / Martha Jungwirth / Mike Kelley / Konrad Klapheck / Ferdinand Kriwet / Eugène Leroy / Richard Lindner / Paul McCarthy / Birgit Megerle / Malcolm Morley / Albert Oehlen / Markus Oehlen / Ed Paschke / Joyce Pensato / Richard Phillips / Christina Ramberg / Daniel Richter / Matthias Schaufler / Julian Schnabel / Hans Schweizer / Rebecca Warren / Franz West / Karl Wirsum

Press contacts

MASI – Museo d'arte della Svizzera italiana

Communication Office
+41 (0)91 815 7962
comunicazione@masilugano.ch

For Switzerland

NEUTRAL
Inna Schill
+41 43 311 3090
isc@neutral.plus

For Italy

ddl+battage

Alessandra de Antonellis
+39 339 363 7388
alessandra.deantonellis@ddlstudio.net

Margherita Baleni
+39 347 445 2374
margherita.baleni@battage.net

Exhibition venues

MASI | LAC
Piazza Bernardino Luini 6
CH – 6900 Lugano

MASI | Palazzo Reali
Via Canova 10
CH – 6900 Lugano

Main Partner



Scientific Partner



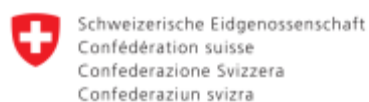
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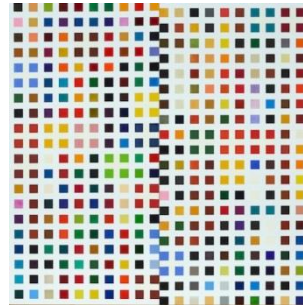
Institutional Partner



Dipartimento federale dell'interno DFI
Ufficio federale della cultura UFC

Press Images

01.
Albert Oehlen
Space is the Place
2020
Oil on canvas
250 x 250 cm
Photo: Simon Vogel
© 2021, ProLitteris, Zurich



02.
Albert Oehlen
I 3
2009
Paper on canvas
170 x 240 cm
Photo: Stefan Rohner
© 2021, ProLitteris, Zurich



03.
Albert Oehlen
Untitled
2005/1997
Oil on canvas
210 x 300 cm
Photo: Lothar Schnepf
© 2021, ProLitteris, Zurich



04.

Willem de Kooning

Untitled

1984

Oil on canvas

223.5 x 195.6 cm

Photo: Stefan Rohner

© The Willem de Kooning Foundation /
2021, ProLitteris, Zurich



05.

Duane Hanson

Man with Walkman

1989

Autobody filler, polychrome in oil, mixed
media with accessories

132.1 x 61 x 106.7 cm

Photo: Courtesy Gagosian Gallery

© 2021, ProLitteris, Zurich



06.

Richard Lindner

Solitaire

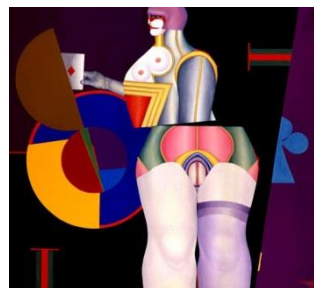
1973

Oil on canvas

180 x 200 cm

Photo: Marco Lietz

© 2021, ProLitteris, Zurich



07.
Birgit Megerle
Radiation
2018
Oil on linen canvas
110 x 85
Photo: Stefan Korthe
© Birgit Megerle



08.
Malcolm Morley
First Class Cabin
1966
Mixed media on canvas
56 x 81.5 cm
Photo: Simon Vogel
© Malcolm Morley



09.
Richard Phillips
Venetia Cuninghame Left (After John D
Green)
2002
Oil, aluminium, foil and graphite on linen
213.5 x 164.4 cm
Photo: def image
© Richard Phillips



10.
Daniel Richter
Untitled
1995
Oil on canvas
60 x 50 cm
Photo: Simon Vogel
© 2021, ProLitteris, Zurich



11.
Julian Schnabel
Portrait of Albert Oehlen
1997
Oil, wax, resin and enamel on canvas
273 x 258
Photo: def image
© Julian Schnabel / 2021, ProLitteris, Zurich



12.
Peter Brüning
Objektbild Rhein
1966/67 ca.
Colour-framed sawn chipboard, wooden slats
170 x 110 cm
Photo: Courtesy Galerie Michael Haas, Berlin
© 2021, ProLitteris, Zurich



Current exhibitions

Nicolas Party

Rovine

Until 09 January 2022

MASI | LAC

Salvatore Vitale. Displaying Security

Premio Artista Bally dell'Anno 2020

Until 18 July 2021

MASI | Palazzo Reali

Sentiment and Observation. Art in Ticino 1850-1950

The MASI collections

From 09 May 2021

MASI | LAC

Masterworks of Modern Photography 1900-1940. The Thomas Walther Collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York

Until 01 August 2021

MASI | LAC

Luigi Pericle. Ad astra

Until 05 September 2021

MASI | Palazzo Reali

Upcoming exhibitions

Plattform21

22 August – 05 September 2021

MASI | Palazzo Reali

Pietro Consagra

La materia poteva non esserci

12 September 2021 – 09 January 2022

Collezione Giancarlo e Danna Olgiati

Antonio Ciseri

03 October 2021 – 13 February 2022

MASI | Palazzo Reali